

**Reorganization of Municipal Departments
and Administrative Procedures**

**Town of Branford
Connecticut**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Branford commissioned this study regarding the reorganization of its town departments with the goal of achieving greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability to citizens in the delivery of services. The organizational structure, as it is currently configured, consists of twenty- two separate departments of all whom directly report to the First Selectwoman. The identified need to reorganize town departments stems from a concern over the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. The scope of the project entails designing an organizational structure that best suits the needs of the Town of Branford in order to achieve its service delivery goals.

Scope of project:

- 1) Evaluate the current organizational chart to identify problem areas with respect to reporting relationships, control, coordination, communication and service delivery
- 2) Identify opportunities to reorganize town departments including merging and consolidating existing departments to reduce the number of direct reports
- 3) Conduct research and data analysis on comparable municipalities for organizational structure and best practices in municipal management
- 4) Review Town of Branford departments and positions for budgetary and human resources implications
- 5) Restructure organizational chart and reporting relationships for a more streamlined organization
- 6) Define the role of a chief administrative officer with respect to oversight of department heads and other responsibilities within the new organizational structure
- 7) Orient department directors to new organizational structure and reporting relationships for better achievement of goals and objectives

A survey of the best practices and an analysis of the organizational characteristics and operating procedures of peer communities in Connecticut and nationwide, the Consultant recommends several structural changes in the Town of Branford. The principal changes include the merger and consolidation of several departments to yield a more streamlined organizational structure. These changes are likely to provide for improved management and fiscal coordination by facilitating better control, coordination and communication between the town's departments. For future consideration is the addition of a chief administrative officer to assist in the oversight of the day to day operations of town departments.

The Consultant recommends that the proposed changes be implemented in phases. Phase one entails a proposal to restructure town departments. Phase two entails the development and implementation of departmental goals and objectives.

Executive Summary: General and Financial Management

The Consultant has identified a series of changes to town departments that entail the consolidation and merger of twenty-two departments into a total of eleven. Related to these departmental changes, the creation of a Chief Administrator Officer position is envisioned as having a major management role in the oversight and supervision of the newly reconfigured departments. Some of the recommended changes would require revision of the Town's charter.

Recommendation 1. *The merger and consolidation of the Tax Collector and Tax Assessor's offices into the Finance Department. The newly constituted Finance Department would house tax collection, tax assessment, budgeting, accounting and purchasing.*

Recommendation 2. *The conversion of the elected Tax Collector position to a permanent professional hired position with the appropriate credentials, powers and responsibilities. (charter revision required)*

Recommendation 3. *The merger and consolidation of the Public Works, Engineering, Facilities, Solid Waste, WPCA and Capital Projects into one Infrastructure Department.*

Recommendation 4. *The merger of the Planning and Zoning Department with Building Inspection, Inland Wetlands, Economic Development and Public Information Office/Grants to comprise the Community Development Department.*

Recommendation 5 . *The conversion of the Special Projects office into Public Information/Grants Office.*

Recommendation 6. *The merger of the Senior Services Department and Counseling Center into one department to be constituted as the Social Services Department.*

Recommendation 7. *The merger of the Animal Control Department with the Police Department.*

Recommendation 8. *The creation of a Chief Administrative Officer position to assist the First Selectman in the management of the day-to-day operations of town departments.*

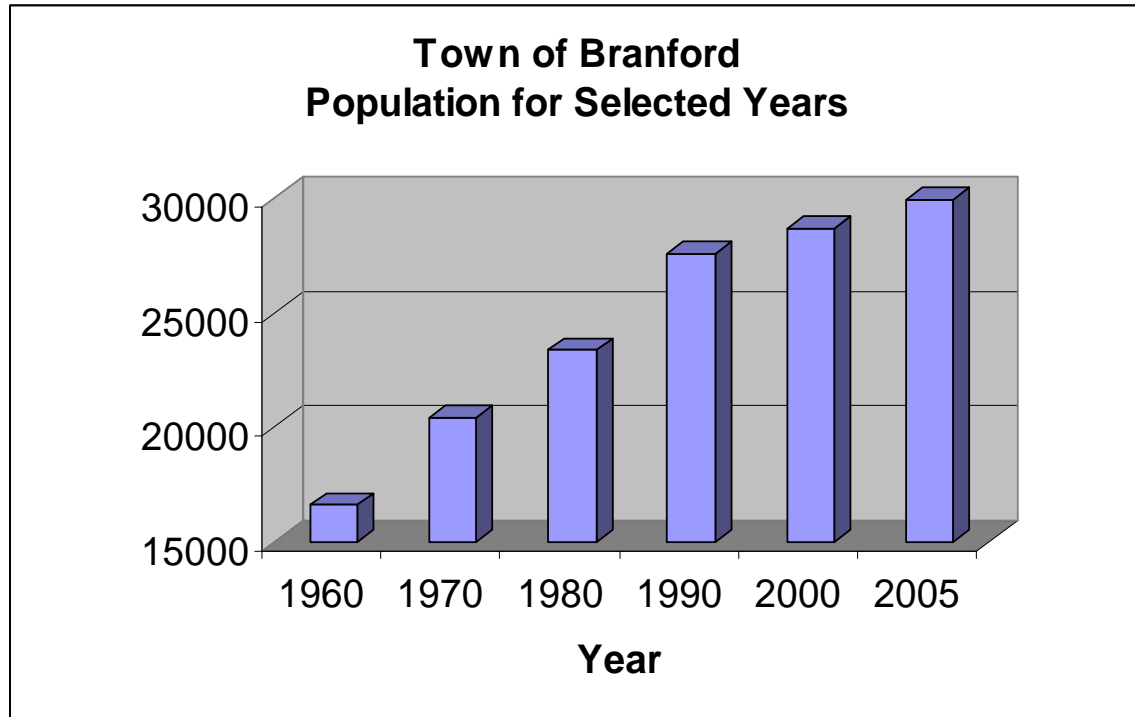
Recommendation 9. *The creation of a Town Charter Review Commission to perform a comprehensive review of the town's charter with the goal of amending the charter to provide for greater efficiency in government operations.*

Recommendation 10. *The routine evaluation of the town's many standing boards and commissions by the Board of Selectmen.*

An organizational chart reflecting the above changes is included in the appendix.

1.0 Background: Town of Branford

Table 1: Rate of population growth in Branford



Town Profiles: Connecticut Department of Community and Economic Development.
www.cerc.com

Since 1960, the population of Branford has increased from 16,610 to 29,946 or eighty percent. Like many municipalities experiencing similar demographic changes, the growth in population creates additional pressures on service delivery. These include police and fire protection, emergency medical response, street repair, snow removal, solid waste disposal, public schools, parks and recreation facilities, public water supply, wastewater treatment capacity. Population increases also place pressure on planning and development services such as building, plumbing, electrical, sanitary and septic inspections as well as zoning and code enforcement, environmental regulation and business licensing. Such changes bring a need for greater organizational complexity to manage the changes entailed by growth. Like many municipalities in Connecticut, Branford has managed incremental increases in services with a decentralized form of government that was designed for small rural communities thus necessitating a comprehensive review of the town organization to ensure its positioning for present and future growth.

THE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE FOR BRANFORD

The Town of Branford faces numerous management challenges brought about by demographic changes and the increased responsibilities that municipalities throughout Connecticut have assumed as the result of federal and state regulations and mandates.

Like many municipalities in Connecticut, Branford's Selectman-Representative Town Meeting (RTM) as well as the Selectman-Town Meeting form of government was intended to serve a much smaller, rural population with fewer responsibilities. Faced with similar challenges of growth and service delivery, many New England municipalities are adopting measures to modernize and streamline their town governments while preserving the essential features of the traditional town meeting form.¹

The purpose of this study was to develop recommendations concerning changes to the management structure and functional responsibilities of existing town departments in order to manage the town in the 21st century. For purposes of the study, the town's management positions are defined as the:

First Selectman	Director, Public Works
Chief of Police	Director, Human Resources
Fire Chief	Director, Human Services
Town Clerk	Director, Information Technology
Town Engineer	Director, Recreation
Town Planner	Tax Assessor
Building Inspector	Tax Collector
Solid Waste	Director, Wallace Willoughby Library
Director, Finance	Director, Blackstone Library
	Director, Senior Center
	Animal Control
	Water Pollution Control Authority
	Economic Development and Special Projects
	Facilities
	Inland Wetlands

¹ *Structure of American Municipal Government Special Data Issue*, ICMA, 2002

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the current organizational chart to identify management challenges with respect to reporting relationships, control, coordination, communication and service delivery. The objective of such a review is to identify possible changes in the management structure and functional responsibilities of departments in order to achieve greater efficiency. Efficiency objectives include the reduction of administrative, decision-making and project delivery costs. Increased administrative and project delivery costs can result from overlapping responsibilities and duplication of efforts. In order to provide recommendations, the Consultant conducted research and analysis on comparable communities in Connecticut for organizational structure and best practices. Additionally, various sources were consulted regarding best practices as recommended by professional municipal organizations such as the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and ICMA.

Through conducting an organizational study, the consultant was able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHS

The Town of Branford, located in South Central Connecticut, has become a popular location for residents, businesses and tourists. In a recent survey, local businesses commended Branford for an “enviable location, business climate and quality of life.”² Among the factors noted for promoting such a climate are: town services, access to town officials, and the availability of business support services.

The Town demonstrates several strengths on which to build. The consultant found an organization that is committed to excellence in the delivery of services to its residents. Management innovations currently underway are:

- Police Department – in the process of seeking of accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation and Law Enforcement Agencies, one of seventeen police departments in the state
- Fire Department – cross training of fire personnel to perform EMS and fire protection
- Animal Control – joint agreement with the Town of North Branford
- Town Clerk – scanning land records for data storage, seeking grants for computer indexing
- Solid Waste – regional cooperation with Bristol
- Finance Department – recent upgrade in bond rating to AA2, the third such upgrade the town has received in the last five years.

² Branford Workforce Development Report, May 2003

- Economic Development – more biotech companies than any other Connecticut town
- Tax Collector – initiative to enable residents to make tax payments online
- IT- several initiatives underway including a new tax software system, vehicle locator system, ADP payroll, MUNIS/Geoplan, online forms and online tax payments

WEAKNESSES

While Branford can point to various organizational strengths currently evidenced in management practices, the Town must surmount several obstacles to management. Among the weaknesses noted, of particular importance is the need for heightened coordination and communication inter-departmentally. Instances of administrative gridlock and buck passing occur in the areas which are cross-functional in nature. For instance, a citizen complaint regarding a drainage issue on one property resulted in a month long process of being bounced from DPW, Inland Wetlands, Assistant Town Engineer's Office, Town Engineer and finally to the First Selectwoman when no resolution was forthcoming. This is representative of the types of delays in decisions and problem resolution that occur when departments fail to coordinate. Issues such as this one which are cross-functional in nature and require coordination among and between departments could be more capably addresses by grouping like departments together as well as empowering an overall administrator to integrate core processes, resolve problems within and across departments, conduct long range planning and ultimately improve service delivery to residents.

The following sections present a detailed analysis of the current organizational structure with recommendations to enhance coordination, communication and service delivery.

2. MUNICIPAL AND FISCAL MANAGEMENT IN CONNECTICUT

Municipal Forms of Government

Local government exists as an important pillar in the U.S. federal system. There are currently five general types of municipal government in the United States. These are: Mayor-council, Council-Manager, Commission, Open Town Meeting, and Representative Town Meeting. Each form of government arose within a distinct historical context and emphasizes different values such as representativeness, nonpartisan competence and executive leadership.

In Connecticut, the three major forms of government are in use by municipalities are depicted in the table below.

Table 2

Forms of Municipal Government in Connecticut	
Selectman-Town Meeting	102
Selectman-RTM	7
Mayor-Council	30
Council-Manager	30
Total	169
CERC, 2005	

Mayor-Council

The Mayor-Council form of government is used in approximately thirty municipalities in Connecticut. It is generally found in small and large cities and large towns. This form of government, with its emphasis on representativeness, consists of one top elected official, Mayor, with an elected legislated body, the Council or Board of Aldermen. The mayor provides policy leadership and executive management.

Council-Manager

The Council-Manager form of government arose during the Progressive Reform era of the early 1900s to exclude politics and bring greater efficiency to local government . It consists of a full-time paid professional referred to as the City or Town Manager who is hired by the council to be the chief executive officer. In this form of government, the

council serves the legislative function and appoints a manger who selects department heads and directs their activities. It is the most prevalent form of municipal government in the United States.

Selectmen-Town Meeting

While relatively few municipalities in the United States are governed by this form of government, the vast majority of municipalities in Connecticut utilize a Selectmen-Town Meeting form of government which dates back to the colonial era. In this form of government, the legislative body is the representative town meeting. Branford has moved from an open town meeting to a representative town meeting (RTM) where voters select a limited number of citizens to represent them at town meetings and vote on the budget. Additionally, the Board of Selectmen is a multi-member body ranging in number from three to five members and is responsible for executive decision-making. Day to day authority is given to the First Selectman who is the chief executive officer. This form of government diffuses authority between the selectmen and the boards and commissions that have oversight over various departments. As Connecticut's municipalities towns grow and change, they have adopted incremental strategies to meet challenges without abandoning the town meeting form of government. One such change is the creation of a chief administrative officer in the form of an administrative assistant, town manager, executive administrator to provide professional support to the Board of Selectmen.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PEER COMMUNITIES

The consultant conducted a series of interviews with municipal officials in Branford and analyzed peer communities in Connecticut. In Branford, the consultant conducted key informant interviews with department heads. These interviews were supplemented by a review of annual town reports, charters, master plan, personnel manuals and other municipal documents. These documents are enhanced by a understanding of the academic commentary on the subject. The interviews yielded key findings regarding the major challenges facing Branford. The insights and perspectives given by department heads were invaluable in formulating the recommendations contained in this report.

The interviews and document reviews were designed to draw comparisons between Branford and its peer communities in order to identify the major similarities and differences in management structure between Branford and other communities in order to identify best practices. Different modes of comparison can be employed depending on the variable under examination. Dimensions of comparison include the form of government, population and demographics, population density, tax base, and coastal versus inland municipalities. In drawing comparisons, the task is to identify trends and tendencies among similar municipalities. While no two municipalities are exactly equal, a close approximation is sufficient to draw useful parallels. For example, a municipality may share the same form of government yet differ in population. Ultimately, best practices in municipal administration transcend form of government and other characteristics.

PEER COMMUNITIES

In terms of the form of government, Branford and six other municipalities utilize the Selectman-RTM form of government. These are: Darien, Fairfield, Greenwich, Groton, Waterford and Westport. Fairfield, Greenwich, Groton and Westport are most similar to the proposed organizational plan in terms of infrastructure and land use offices. Groton and Westport are most similar in terms of financial operations, infrastructure and land use.

4 GENERAL MANAGEMENT

4.1 Current Organizational Structure

The Town of Branford's organizational chart as depicted in appendix, displays twenty-two departments arrayed horizontally.

Types of Organizations

A key consideration for any entity is how best to structure the work of the organization for the accomplishment of goals. Best is understood to be the most cost effective structure capable of disciplining the present demand for services. In the day to day delivery of services, organizational structure is the formal decision making framework by which job tasks are divided, grouped and coordinated.

The type of organizational structure, as it is currently configured, known as a flat organization, is generally seen in some private sector organizations. Such organizations are designed to create independent enterprises that can rapidly respond to customers' needs or changes in the business environment.

The type of organizational structure most typically displayed in government is the bureaucratic organization. While the name carries with it a negative connotation, bureaucracy, as developed by Max Weber, is the type of organization that is most widely utilized by government organizations. The characteristics of bureaucratic organization are:

- Well-defined organizational structure
- Formal chain of command
- Division of labor
- Job specialization
- Clear lines of authority
- Span of control

The advantages of bureaucratic organization are the clear lines of authority and well-defined organizational structure. This type of structure emphasizes accountability, functional specialization and professionalism.

Selecting An Organizational Structure

A prerogative of any chief executive is the ability to select an organizational structure that is most conducive to the efficient and effective operations. Home rule affords chief executives in municipalities the ability to reorganize town department to best achieve goals and objectives. Municipalities need not be bound by the organizational structure of previous administrations particularly when changing needs dictate a new form that will

be most conducive to efficient and effective operations. Many municipalities have opted to change their structure or form of government.³ For example, twenty years ago, most municipalities did not have a direct role in economic development. Today, increasingly more towns and cities have seen the need to add an Economic Development function to their organizations to attract and retain commercial and residential development.

The current organizational Structure with twenty-two separate departments arrayed horizontally produces administrative gridlock and delays in decision- making. The proposed organizational structure reduces departments to ten for a span of organizational control and oversight of no greater than 5-7 managers per supervisor.

³ According to a 2001 survey conducted by ICMA, ten percent of respondents noted an attempt to change their structure or form government.

5 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Town of Branford, like many communities in Connecticut, faces fiscal pressures from a constrained tax base that heavily relies on residential property. Financial pressures prompt communities like Branford rethink the fundamental organization of the town including financial processes. Fiscal pressures can be better addressed through more effective coordination of town departments. For discussion purposes, the Town's financial processes are divided into two main areas: budgeting and financial administration. The responsibilities for financial operations in Branford are divided between the Board of Finance, a Treasurer, a Tax Assessor, a Tax Collector and the Finance Director. The budget sequence and schedule are as follows: revenue and expenditure estimates for the annual budget are submitted to the First Selectman by boards, commissions and department heads by the last week of February. By mid-March, the First Selectman presents budget estimates to the Board of Finance. Public and departmental hearings are held. In mid-April, the BOF presents its recommended budget to the RTM which holds departmental and public hearings. During May, the RTM holds the annual budget meeting and the BOF sets the new mill rate.⁴

In the management of the budget while the fiscal year is underway, a consistent finding among department heads is the cumbersome process to receive approval for line-item transfers. Due to the decentralization and fragmentation of budgetary decision making between the Board of Finance and RTM, routine line item transfers may take up to a total of four months. To expedite more routine line-item transfers, the Consultant recommends considering setting a higher threshold for the dollar amount that would eliminate the multi-step approval process. Smaller transfers should be capable of receiving departmental approval as long as such transfers stay within the boundaries of the authorized budget. Implementation of this recommendation would require the amendment of the Town's charter.

⁴ Official Statement, January 24, 2006

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Financial Management

The Consultant has identified changes to the finance function as representing one of the most important management improvements to be immediately pursued by the Town of Branford.

Recommendation 1. *The merger and consolidation of the Tax Collector and Tax Assessor's offices into the Finance Department. The newly constituted Finance Department would house tax collection, tax assessment, budgeting, accounting and purchasing. (requires charter revision)*

The emerging best practice in Connecticut calls for a Finance Department to oversee all of the town's financial officers, including the Assessor, Treasurer and Collector. Tasks that share functional similarities are likely to benefit from economies of scope when there is reliance on similar human capital, software and data. This form of organization will provide a seamless operation from assessment through collection, cash and debt management, expenditures and auditing.

The Finance function is integrally related to the fiscal health and condition of the town. As the formal framework within which financial decision-making occurs, it is of vital importance that the finance function be organized in such a way as to foster communication, facilitate the flow of information and coordinate finance functions. The model city charter calls for a fully integrated financial organization that is generally divided into five areas of control.⁵

- accounts
- budget
- assessments
- purchasing
- collection

Each of the five areas listed above represents components of financial management. Additionally, audits, internal controls, pensions and investments also fall under the area of the integrated finance department. In smaller governments, the finance director may be responsible for some of these functions. The Director of Finance supervises and coordinates these major financial services.

The current configuration of this function entails a Finance Department with a director who oversees budgeting, finance and purchasing. The assessment and collection functions are housed in separate departments. Grouping these departments under the

⁵ Management Policies in Local Government Finance, ICMA

same Finance Department will facilitate the sharing of information and coordination of tasks. While the current office holders do report the regular sharing of information and communicate regularly, albeit on an informal basis, a formalized structural arrangement would ensure that these practices are maintained over the long term.

Model Municipal Charter

The model municipal charter represents the best practices for financial organization. While the model charter suggests the organizational framework outlined below, it can be adapted to fit Branford's organizational needs. Branford's financial organization has a very different structure which appears to work well. The outline below could be used as a guideline for future organizational changes.

Division of Accounts

- Pre-audits all purchase orders, receipts and disbursements.
- Prepares payrolls
- Prepares and issues checks
- Keeps general accounting records
- Maintains or supervises cost accounts
- Bills property and other taxes, special assessments, and utility and other service charges

Division of Assessments

- Makes studies of property values for assessment purposes
- Prepares and maintains property maps and records
- Assesses property for taxation
- Prepares assessment rolls
- Special assessments for local improvements such as sewer and water authority

Tax Collection Division

- Collects all taxes, special assessments, utility bills, and other revenues
- Issues licenses
- Maintains custody of all local government funds
- Plans cash flow
- Disburses local government funds on proper vouchers or warrants
- Invests available funds

Purchasing Division

- Purchases all materials, supplies, and equipment for local government departments
- Establishes standards and prepares specifications
- Tests and inspects materials and supplies by the local government
- Maintains an inventory system for supplies
- Administers risk management program

Budget Division

- Assembles budget estimates and assists chief administrator in preparing budget document
- Acts as agent of the chief administrator in controlling the administration of the budget
- Conducts studies related to improvements in administrative organization and procedures

Current purchasing system. The purchasing function plays an important role in fostering efficiency in local government. A function that has become increasingly professionalized, many purchasing officers have benefited from formal training and certification. In Branford, many department heads report doing their own purchasing which defeats the need for the purchasing officer. To fully maximize this function, it is recommended that this position be upgraded to a managerial level with the attendant training and certification to ensure that purchasing is more fully centralized in order to achieve greater cost savings. Moreover, department heads will be better able to focus on the management tasks of running their respective departments.

The role of the purchasing agent in municipal government has important implications for expenditures and cash flow and presents opportunities to control and reduce expenditures. The management of the procurement process should entail setting standards and specifications, forecasting requirements for goods and services, procedural steps for awarding orders and contracts, and the distribution and storage of goods. A need to conduct inventory of all supplies and materials held by the town was noted by management.

Purchasing is becoming recognized as both a management function and a professional activity. An increasing trend among many municipalities is the certification of their purchasing agents to become designated as a Professional Public Buyer and Certified Purchasing Officer.

6.2 Financial Management

Recommendation 2. *The conversion of the elected Tax Collector's office to a permanent professional hired position made by the Selectmen. (charter revision required)*

There is a clear trend toward converting of the Tax Collector position from an elected or appointed position to a professional level hired position. The Tax Collector is responsible for the collection and reconciliation of accounts for municipal taxes. In Connecticut, approximately one half of the Tax Collectors are appointed while one half are elected positions. According to the Connecticut Tax Collectors Association, an increasing number of municipalities have opted to appoint their Tax Collectors through a charter revision process. For example, the neighboring community of Clinton recently underwent a charter revision to change the tax collector from elected to an appointed position.

There are many reasons for these trends, including the increased size and complexity of town budgets and increasing state regulations. A high tax collection rate contributes to the overall financial health of the town and fosters credibility with bond rating agencies. Presently, the Tax Collection Department is undertaking several initiatives to allow citizens to make tax payments online through new software acquisition saving time and paperwork. Moreover, the present office holder is in the process of receiving certification through the Connecticut Tax Collectors Association. However, elections may not ensure that future office holders will have the professional qualifications, financial management experience or specialized knowledge that Connecticut state laws and regulations require concerning municipal financial practices. Additionally there is a learning curve required in tax collection practices that electoral cycles do not always afford. When an elected officeholder under the present system may pursue certification that may take up to two years, the time and effort invested in such education may be for naught if such officeholder is not reelected. Moreover, the upheaval that may result in office changes can negatively impact service delivery.

6.3 Public Works

Recommendation 3. *The merger and consolidation of the Public Works, Engineering, Facilities/Capital Planning, Solid Waste and WPCA into one Infrastructure Department.*

The American Public Works Association identifies the following functions as related to public works: municipal engineering, equipment services, solid wastes, building, grounds and water resources.

A Department of Public Works provides basic municipal services in a town. While towns may configure these public works services differently, they generally include many of the following type of services:

- Streets – design, construction, maintenance, snow removal, lighting
- Water – system design, treatment, distribution
- Sewage
- Traffic – sign and signal installation and maintenance
- Solid waste – collection and disposal
- Engineering – to support streets, water, sewer, traffic, etc.
- Building maintenance
- Parks and grounds maintenance
- Equipment maintenance

Currently, the Town of Branford houses these functions in separate departments. This plan proposes to merge the Public Works, Engineering, WPCA, Solid Waste, Capital Projects and Facilities departments into an Infrastructure Department. The commonality of many of these functions and the need for planning and coordination make grouping them into one department a measure that would facilitate greater efficiency and economies of scope. Peer communities such as Guilford have consolidated their DPW, Facilities and Solid Waste into one department. Similarly, some of the other Selectman-RTM towns group these functions together.

Public Works. The need for greater coordination is noted between public works and engineering. Many maintenance projects have engineering components. Other areas of overlap occur in the maintenance responsibilities that are currently divided Public Works and the Recreation department particularly for grounds maintenance. To avoid the duplication and overlapping which results from such an arrangement, the Consultant recommends the centralization of these functions under the public works department in order to provide greater economies of scope.

The Engineering Department provides assistance to the public and other town departments in roads, street lines, rights of way and easements, sanitary sewers, floodplain and stormwater management. The department noted that while coordination among the departments happens informally, it would be beneficial to achieve a higher level of coordination and control. The Engineering department, housed in the newly reconfigured Infrastructure Department, would provide consultation to Public Works and Community Development.

Duplication and overlapping.

Department of Public Works handles buildings and grounds maintenance with the exception of town parks which are handled by the Recreation department. The duplication in the area of maintenance between the two departments has created coordination and control problems. From interviews with personnel, the consultant noted the difficulty in tracking equipment for inventory control purposes due to the splitting of maintenance functions between the two departments. The Consultant recommends that the Recreation Department handle the maintenance functions for all town parks.

Recommendation 4. *The merger of the Planning and Zoning, Inland Wetlands, Building Inspection, Economic Development, and Public Information/Grants functions into a Community Development Department.*

Community Development encompasses the traditional planning and zoning functions that support the development of the community at large – residential development, and economic development, which largely supports the attraction and retention of business.

“The practice of combining planning and economic development into a single department is growing in popularity.⁶ Among comparable municipalities, a community development department handles land use, open space, planning and zoning, inland wetlands, zoning board of appeals, zoning enforcement, building inspection and economic development.”⁷

An increasing trend among municipal governments is the addition of the economic development function. As towns grow in size and complexity, it is a common model of organizational development to have a Department of Economic Development or Community Development. The concern for job creation, attraction and retention of business and new income generation are prompting municipalities of all sizes to focus greater attention on economic development. Even among smaller municipalities “small town economic development programs are growing in number and sophistication and that smaller communities are doing what they can for themselves to shore up and expand their economic base.”⁸

The choices about how to pursue economic development strategies are viewed in relation to a more integral approach regarding the overall community development. Several different approaches are displayed among municipalities in terms of organizing for economic development depending on the size, form of government and prevailing culture of the municipality. In many municipalities, a separate department with staff and resources are seen. In others, planning and economic development have been combined into a single department facilitating coordination among related activities.⁹

Planning and Zoning, Inland Wetlands, Building Inspection, and Economic Development possess functional similarities in terms of work processes that are integrated in many respects. All of these departments are responsible for land use within the town. Offices with functional similarities benefit from economies of scope and

⁶ *Managing Small Cities and Counties*, A Practical Guide 1994, ICMA

⁷ Community Development Department, Town of North Haven, www.town.north-haven.ct.us

⁸ *Small City Economic Development: Roads to Success*, National League of Cities, 1991.

⁹ *Managing Small Cities and Counties: A Practical Guide*, ed. James M Banovetz, Drew A. Doland and John W. Swain, ICMA Municipal Management Series, 1994.

procedural affinities. While department directors frequently noted that informal coordination and communication already occurs, by housing these functions together under one department, greater economies of scope, and coordination and control may be achieved particularly with respect to development matters. Additionally, this would minimize cost redundancies when departments rely on similar fixed costs such as information.

The Planning and Zoning Department regulates property uses, both residential and commercial, with respect to the height and size of structures, grading, erosion control, coastal impacts and parking. The Planning and Zoning Commission reviews regulated activities on commercial and residential property.

Inland Wetlands Department in conjunction with the Inland Wetlands Commission enforces regulations to protect watercourses and inland wetlands from damage or destruction. In enforcing Connecticut statutes, the agency balances the need for economic growth and to protect the environment. The Inland Wetlands Officer reports working closely with the Planning and Zoning Department and Economic Development. Inland Wetlands approval is the first step in the application process for new developments.

The Building Inspection Department

The department is responsible for issuing permits for residential and commercial structures in town. It also processes permits for electrical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning and demolition which includes plan reviews for technical compliance with building codes, town ordinances and inspections during all phases of construction.

One-stop Shopping For Businesses

The Town would benefit from consolidating permit processes in a manner that provides for greater efficiency of resources. A one-stop shopping approach would facilitate the permit process and thereby enhance the business community's perception of the town's responsiveness.

Recommendation 5. The conversion of the Special Projects position into a Public Information/Grants Office to be housed within the Community Development Department.

The current position of Special Projects Director entails a job description that is responsible for economic development and other duties such as intergovernmental relations and public information. The position is currently housed in the Office of the First Selectman.

Public Information.

The dissemination of information regarding town activities to the public represents an important task in any organization. Currently, no one individual is solely responsible for this task but rather is dispersed in a number of departments. The Town would benefit from centralizing this function within one department for the dissemination official information in a systematic manner. A public information officer is generally responsible for publicizing and promoting town programs using a variety of media such as news releases, newsletters and brochures, speech writing, consumer publications, radio and television presentations, new conferences. Also respond to news media request for information or interviews about recent events. Other duties include representing the town as spokesperson to the news media and public, acting as a liaison with media representatives, preparing and editing press releases, public service announcements, plan and produce promotional materials for the town.

Grant Writing.

At the present time, no single department or employee is charged with the task of identifying and obtaining funds through grants. Currently, several departments reported that some individuals have been assigned the additional responsibility for grant writing. The Town would benefit from centralizing such a function in one department with the objective of systematically pursuing grant opportunities particularly as intergovernmental transfers are declining. The Consultant recommends the conversion of the Special Projects position into a Public Information/Grants Office to handle these two functions.

Recommendation 6. The merger of Senior Services and Counseling Center into a Social Services Department.

Both the Counseling Center and Senior Services Departments are heavily involved in the provision of human services for town residents ranging from children to adults. An important contribution to the quality of life in Branford, these services promote a sense of community. Departments with functional similarities benefit from the economies of scope that obtains when such offices are grouped together. The social nature of the programs provided by the Counseling and Senior Services Departments make such a grouping conducive to the delivery of these services.

Recommendation 7. The merger of the Animal Control Department with the Police Department.

The Animal Control function is currently constituted as a free standing department that is staffed by an Animal Control Officer and an Assistant Animal Control Officer. Towns in Connecticut handle animal control in a variety of different ways. The issues are sometimes treated as a matter of public safety, public health, or inspections, and communities in Connecticut reflect this variety of approaches. In peer communities, Animal Control was placed in the Police Department¹⁰. Given its major role in enforcement of town ordinances and close coordination with the Police Department, it is recommended that this function be subsumed under the Police Department. The Animal Control Department reports working closely with the Police Department in matters of enforcement and emergency calls. A formal reporting relationship would enable closer coordination in enforcement.

The Animal Control Department has recently signed a Joint Agreement to enable North Branford to pay to utilize Branford's shelter. The department is also exploring with the Information Technology the ability to issue dog licenses at the shelter to better serve citizens.

¹⁰ The Towns of Guilford and North Haven are organized in this fashion.

Recommendation 8. The creation of a Chief Administrative Officer position to manage the day-to-day operations of town departments.

The increasing pressure on service delivery as well as the growing responsibilities for municipal government has hastened the trend towards professional expertise in town management and for greater coordination of the town's major departments. The growth in responsibilities has prompted many municipalities with a Selectman form of government to create a chief administrative officer position to assist the chief executive with the day-to-day operations of town government.

An increasing trend nationwide and in Connecticut is the addition of a chief administrative officer position. Approximately 80% of cities nationwide have a chief administrative officer. However, smaller towns display this trend as well. As Frank Connolly notes: "A growing number of municipalities with selectman forms of government are hiring full-time administrator officers. This individual is responsible to the board of selectmen for the management of day-to-day tasks such as purchasing, accounting, scheduling, general administration, and even some operations. However, this person does not have the authority of a town manager in hiring, firing, budget preparation, and other activities."¹¹ For example, the Town of Canton, has a Chief Administrative Office that is hired and reports directly to the Board of Selectmen. The powers and duties are enumerated in the town charter.¹² In four out of the seven towns that utilize the Selectman-RTM form of government, the First Selectman is assisted by a professional administrator.¹³

The title and job description and duties of the CAO vary from town to town depending on the specific responsibilities assigned to the position by the Board of Selectmen. In some cases, the town charter provides for a professional town manager. Peer communities in Connecticut demonstrate that this trend towards the hiring of a CAO is displayed in a variety of forms of government.¹⁴ The titles also vary between municipalities and include: chief administrative officer, town administrator, director of administrative services, executive administrator, director of governmental operations, etc. In general, an examination of classified advertisements found the following duties included for the chief administrative officer:

- oversee and coordinate the operations of town departments
- act as liaison with the legislative body
- prepare administrative policy issues
- assist with budget preparation

¹¹ Connolly, Frank (1992) *Local Government in Connecticut*. 2nd edition, The Institute of Public Service, University of Connecticut.

¹² Town Charter, Canton, Connecticut

¹³ These towns are Darien, Fairfield, Greenwich and Groton.

¹⁴ Connecticut Conference of Municipalities

- assist in the drafting of proposed ordinances and resolutions
- make recommendations for improvement in town policies, procedures or programs
- represent the chief elected officer at meetings involving federal and state agencies

- present and prepare reports on behalf of the Board of Selectmen to the Town boards and commissions
- responsible for current and future needs of the Town
- inform and recommend to the Board of Selectmen opportunities for state and federal grant programs
- transmit direction from the First Selectman and Board of Selectman to departments and follow up to assure compliance and timely completion of assignments
- provide executive leadership to town government in the temporary absence of First Selectman
- other duties as assigned by First Selectman and Board of Selectman

Qualifications of CAO

Generally speaking, the qualifications for the CAO position usually entail a background in public administration through some combination of educational degree and experience in local government. A review of the job descriptions found that incumbents should possess a minimum of a Bachelor's degree with preferably a Master's Degree in Public Administration and three to five years of increasingly responsible experience in municipal administration or an equivalent combination of education and work experience.

Compensation of CAO

The compensation levels for chief administrative officer positions vary depending on the responsibilities and reporting relationship with the Board of Selectmen. In cases where the CAO or Town Manager is the principal or chief administrative officer the salary was higher than in cases where the CAO was assisting the full-time First Selectperson. The salary ranges are displayed in table 3 below.

Table 3 Compensation Chief Administrative Officer Positions

<i>Town</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Gov't</i>	<i>CEO</i>	<i>Salary</i>	<i>CAO Title</i>	<i>Salary</i>	
<i>Shelton</i>	<i>39,121</i>	<i>Aldermen</i>	<i>Mayor</i>	<i>88,830</i>	<i>CAO</i>	<i>63,233</i>	
<i>Vernon</i>	<i>29,206</i>	<i>Council</i>	<i>Mayor</i>	<i>20,748</i>	<i>Town Administrator</i>	<i>106,597</i>	
<i>East Haven</i>	<i>28,710</i>	<i>Council</i>	<i>Mayor</i>	<i>71,153</i>	<i>Dir. Of Admin. Services</i>	<i>70,384</i>	
<i>Windham</i>	<i>23,014</i>	<i>Selectmen</i>	<i>First Selectman</i>	<i>59,800</i>	<i>Executive Administrator</i>	<i>62,538</i>	
<i>Stonington</i>	<i>18,206</i>	<i>Selectmen</i>	<i>First Selectman</i>	<i>79,014</i>	<i>Dir. Of Admin. Services</i>	<i>73,742</i>	
<i>Weston</i>	<i>10,239</i>	<i>Selectmen</i>	<i>First Selectman</i>	<i>27,500</i>	<i>Town Administrator</i>	<i>101,541</i>	
<i>Canton</i>	<i>9,412</i>	<i>Selectmen</i>	<i>First Selectman</i>	<i>17,000</i>	<i>CAO</i>	<i>91,000</i>	
<i>Woodbridge</i>	<i>9,249</i>	<i>Selectmen</i>	<i>Mayor</i>	<i>66,307</i>	<i>CAO</i>	<i>77,818</i>	
<i>Putnam</i>	<i>9,079</i>	<i>Selectmen</i>	<i>Mayor</i>	<i>29,941</i>	<i>CAO</i>	<i>62,700</i>	
<i>Columbia</i>	<i>5,228</i>	<i>Selectmen</i>	<i>First Selectman</i>	<i>10,000</i>	<i>CAO</i>	<i>66,525</i>	

Connecticut Conference of Municipalities

Compensation for chief administrative officer positions vary depending on the level of responsibility, population size and type of government. In general, salaries range from \$40,000 to upwards of \$100,000. In instances where the chief elected official has duties that are more ceremonial in nature and involvement in day to day operations is minimal, the chief administrative officer assumes greater duties with a commensurate salary. Salaries should reflect not just current duties but also the increased complexity from Branford's anticipated growth.

There is a marked tendency to hire a CAO or town manager in cases where all the board of selectmen are part-time. In the case of Branford, since the First Selectman handles many of the day –to- day operations, the volume of workload has increased in recent years necessitating the hiring of an assistant with executive administrative capabilities. This can be achieved either through the upgrade of the current executive assistant's position or the addition of a position. It is recommended that the Town hire a professional manager to assist the First Selectmen in the short-term. In the long term, the consultant recommends the study and analysis of the feasibility of moving towards a town manager model.

Recommendation 9. *The appropriate authority should appoint a Town Charter Review Commission to undertake a comprehensive review of the town's charter with the goal of amending the charter to provide for greater efficiency in government operations.*

The purpose of this management study is to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in town operations. Since some of the recommended changes may have implications for the town charter and may entail revision, it is suggested that a charter review commission could study the changes in further detail. The current Town Charter was last updated in 1991. The Town has experienced considerable growth since that time and would benefit from a review and revision of the town charter to facilitate administrative processes. The town charter review has undergone sporadic attempts at revision. The Consultant recommends the appointment of a commission with a specific mandate and timeframe to complete the task. This study could serve as a point of departure for the commission's effort. Several Connecticut towns have undergone charter revisions in recent years including Colchester, Durham, Fairfield, East Harford, Stratford, Andover, Oxford and Madison.

Recommendation 10. *The Selectmen should routinely evaluate and provide direction to the town's many standing boards and commissions.*

The Town of Branford has numerous boards and commissions that assist with the management of government. These boards and commissions include:

**Police Commission
Compassion Club
Zoning Appeals Board
Planning and Zoning Commission
Fire Commission
Sewer Authority
Human Services Board**

**Economic Development Commission
Recreation Commission
Elderly Commission
WWL Board
Solid Waste Commission
Inland Wetlands Commission**

The Town is fortunate to have many dedicated volunteers to serve on its boards and commissions. However, the Consultant found that there exists a wide degree of variation in terms of how the powers and duties of each of the boards and commissions are constituted stemming from ambiguity in the town charter. Some have a great degree of oversight and responsibility for town departments including the hiring and firing of department heads while others serve in an advisory capacity. This variation creates policy competition with department directors as well as policy uncertainty for staff. For example, policy competition results when some boards and commissions are empowered with functions generally associated with department heads and the Selectmen. Such a bifurcated management structure creates policy uncertainty as staff is given various and sometimes conflicting directives.

It would be beneficial to conduct a comprehensive review of all town boards and commissions in order to update policies and procedures with respect to their powers and responsibilities and relationship to town departments. Moreover, there needs to be some centralization and a degree of oversight for all boards and commissions in order to determine their effectiveness in carrying out their goals and objectives.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

Information Technology

Technological innovations are integrally related to organizational effectiveness and service delivery. By introducing a variety of computer software packages and e-government, public services are more efficiently delivered through these time saving devices. The Town has made important strides in automating many functions and services transitioning from a largely trouble shooting function to project management. Viewing its role as one of service for two groups of clients – internal and external, the Information Technology Department has introduced technological improvements that have touched nearly every department. Several new software packages have been acquired during the past fiscal year. The introduction of the Microsoft Calendar program has facilitated the scheduling of inter-departmental meetings. The town would benefit from the continuation of an information technology committee to enable department directors to have input into proposals.

E-government. The trend among many municipalities is the introduction of e-government or web-enabled delivery of services. E-government enables residents and businesses to conduct certain functions that would ordinarily require one's presence at town hall, for example applying for permits. As a credit to Branford, smaller municipalities have lagged behind in these efforts. The Town of Branford has made available many forms and applications available in a downloadable format. Some of these include town green and park usage, application for a building permit and inland wetlands permit, voter registration. Plans to expand the number of forms available online will include resident stickers, marriage licenses, birth/death certificates, dog licenses and fishing licenses.

The Town and its residents would benefit from further developing these capabilities by maximizing the use and availability of the town's business processes to cut costs, improve efficiencies and provide improved customer services. The next phase would entail the ability to submit forms and applications electronically.

Human Resources.

The Town of Branford has a workforce of two hundred and three employees. Of these, 149 are members of collective bargaining units. The average age of personnel is forty five and the average length of service is 20.5 years. The longevity of its employees attests to the work environment of the town. However, a potential problem exists in terms of staffing positions in later years as employees begin to retire. There is a managerial staff consists of department directors. The lack of middle management, while beneficial in holding down personnel costs, presents a potential issue for succession planning.

Among the functions performed by the Human Resources Department are benefits, payroll, labor relations and risk management. More efficient utilization of resources and financial accountability could be achieved by shifting payroll and risk management functions to the Finance Department. The processing of payroll checks and the purchasing of risk insurance are both arguably finance functions. Also noted in interviews was the need for more training programs and equipping supervisors with the skills and abilities to discipline employees without excessive reliance on the Human Resources Department. A more efficient and effective utilization of resources could be achieved if departments assumed more responsibilities for employee discipline.

Action Requests.

A consistent finding throughout the organization is the lack of a centralized complaint handling system. Numerous department directors reported spending a fairly significant amount of time responding to citizen inquiries and complaints. While they are responsive, a better use of upper level management's time is recommended. Recently, a computer software program has been introduced and centralized in the First Selectman's office. Further training needs to occur for a more complete implementation. There also needs to be a protocol for complaints from initial contact to resolution to ensure that such requests are handled in a timely manner. Some organizations handle complaints through the designation of an ombudsman. Unless such an individual is knowledgeable regarding departmental responsibilities, this may result in unnecessary delays in routing and identifying the appropriate person to respond. Instead, the Consultant recommends that a series of workshops be conducted in every department to instruct on the handling of action requests and to imbue staff with a customer oriented approach.

CONCLUSION

The Town of Branford has undergone many population and demographic changes over the last few decades. The proposed organizational changes will better enable the town to manage present and future growth. The changes offer the town a more streamlined and efficient organizational structure that will enhance productivity. Since the preliminary report was issued in May, several positive changes have been implemented that will prove beneficial to the town particularly in the area of finance. In addition, information technology advances continue to enhance and support the organization's productivity. Finally, while changes in organizational structure are essential for aligning the organization to better deliver services, they cannot replace the need for strong management skills. Communication and coordination within and between departments are key elements to making any new organizational arrangements sustainable over the long term.

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INTERVIEWS

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Interview with Pat Andriole, Executive Director, Human Services, Town of Branford, March 15, 2006

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Interview with Joanne Cleary, Tax Collector, Town of Branford, March 30, 2006

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Interview with Susan Donovan, Director, Willoughby Wallace Library, Town of Branford, March 31, 2006

Interview with Stephen Dudley, Town Engineer, Town of Branford, March 22, 2006

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Interview with James Finch, Finance Director, and Kathryn LaBanca, Assistant Finance Director, Town of Branford, March 13, 2006

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Interview with Margaret Hall, Manager, Solid Waste, Town of Branford, March 22, 2006

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Interview with Vincent Palmieri, Director of Administration and Finance, Town of North Haven, August 8, 2006

Interview with Manny Furtado, Director, Water Pollution Control Authority, August, 2006

Interview with Anthony Cinicola, Building Inspector, September 30, 2006

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Banovetz, James M., Doland, Drew A. and John W. Swain. *Managing Small Cities and Counties A Practical Guide* (1994) International City Management Association Municipal Management Series.

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